

GRSMMP Conference Call 5 April, 2007 - Notes

1. Participants in the conference call included Carl Ferraro (AL), Syed Khalil (LA), Ray Newby (TX), Rafael Calderon (TNC), Bobbi Reed (GoMex Foundation), Kris Benson (NOAA), Bob Martinson (MMS), Bruce Baird (MMS), Barbara Keeler (EPA), John Bowie (EPA), Drew Puffer (EPA), Cherie Price (COE, New Orleans), Billy Hicks (COE, New Orleans), Bob Bosenberg (COE, New Orleans), Lynn Martin (COE, IWR), Jeff Williams (USGS) and Larry Parson (COE, Mobile). The conference call agenda was as follows:

- GRSMMP Strawman
- Refinement of Dredging Information
- ERDC Support to LA
- Questionnaires
- Identify Focus Areas
- Next Call

2. The first agenda was concerned the strawman that was prepared by Cherie Price from the New Orleans District in February. This strawman should not be confused with the original outline that was put together to identify what the GRSMMP should address. The intent of this strawman is to provide guidelines for steps taken to create and fill in specific components of the master plan. Comments are still being solicited from the team to assure that the plan will address the appropriate topics to meet the states' needs. It was requested for team members to please review the strawman and provide inputs Cherie, Larry, or Jeff Williams.

3. As part of the March workshop, Corps representatives from the Gulf Districts presented information on the Corps' dredging projects. Each District provided a summary of where dredging is taking place, sediment type, dredging volumes, and disposal practices for project within their jurisdiction. In many cases, it was shown that some beneficial use practices are already being employed. A recommendation to the Corps from the workshop was made to devise a means for better sediment data access and management for dredging activities and the Corps is looking into methods to better manage this information into a database that is accessible to those who need it. It was recommended during the call that the database should include more information on beneficial uses and beach nourishment projects, sources and volumes of material.

Prior to the workshop, a common format for presenting this information was provided by the New Orleans District since they were already in the process of compiling this type of information. It was requested that the format be shared with others needing to compile similar information. The overall goal is to get this information into a GIS format including shape files showing locations, channels, disposal areas, beneficial uses, ocean dumping, etc. Will work with ERDC and Mobile's Spatial Data Branch to evaluate how this can be accomplished.

It was pointed out that the Atchafalaya data should be part of this database and that the Vicksburg District should be involved. Some of the states are also actively compiling this type of information for non-federal actions. LA uses 3 general categories for sediment resources and the general needs for it, which includes sandy (e.g. barrier island), sand-mix, and fines. LADNR has data on sediment resources that they can send for inclusion in the compilation.

4. A question was raised pertaining to the overall schedule of GRSMMP effort. The effort is based on the 3-year schedule developed by the RRCT. We are approximately half way into that the timeframe which gives us about a year and half for the GRSMMP.

5. The next item on the agenda concerned ERDC involvement with the New Orleans District in providing assistance in the ongoing LA-CPR program. ERDC is working to develop guidelines on how much material can actually be used from identified resources areas such as lake beds (clays), offshore (sand), and bays (mixed). It is hoped that these guidelines will help to optimize maximum use while minimizing affects to environmental resources, geological processes, and hydrodynamics. Syed suggested that Andy Morang and/or Don Stauble from ERDC be invited to explain what they are doing so the other states can determine whether they are interested in doing this in their regions as well and discuss whether some recommendations might be incorporated into the GRSMMP.

6. During the conference call it was discussed and agreed that the state reps would follow up on filling out the questionnaire that was distributed prior to the workshop last month. The purpose of the questionnaire was to focus discussions at the workshop. During the workshop and conference call it was reiterated that it would be beneficial for the states to share the questionnaire with some of the other state contacts and solicit input from those that do not normally participate in the GRSMMP conference calls and meetings. It was requested that responses to the questions be provided prior to the next GRSMMP conference call which is scheduled for next week (Thursday May 3) so that the responses can be compiled and sent out. Responses have already been received from AL and LA.

7. The next item on the agenda was to identify focus areas as recommended during the facilitated discussions at the March workshop. It is proposed that a subgroup within the GRSMMP team be formed for each focus area to specifically address related issues. Six focus areas have been proposed and include the following:

- *Policies, authorities and funding* - The intention of this focus area is to identify sources of existing related information and examine means to provide greater flexibility to support restoration projects. In doing so, existing authorities and policies can be brought together along with how they might be modified to promote RSM actions (e.g. at the recent meeting there was discussion of potentially greater emphasis on consideration of environmental benefits in sediment management decisions. This focus area should be looking at ways to make policies and authorities more flexible to facilitate recommendations that come out of the master plan.

- *Sediment Resources* - This focus area deals with sediment transport and sediment budgets issues and summarize the studies that have been done in terms of how it might support the GRSMMP. The group should also compile and summarize programs, studies, and databases that have been developed that provide information concerning sediment sources. Making such information available for those who need it should also be a consideration.

- *Dredging Activities* - Dredging activities are a potential source of sediment and should be considered in any restoration planning process. This type of information is not well maintained. This focus area will address better dredging data access and management for

dredging activities and ways better manage this information into a database that is accessible to those who need it. It was recommended during the call that the database should include more information on beneficial uses and beach nourishment projects, sources and volumes of material.

- *Data Management* - This focus area will be concerned with identifying data management tools and provide recommendations on how to make information available to those who need it.

- *Ecological Components of RSM* - This area should focus on examining the types of projects being considered and the benefits and impacts of the regional management approach.

- *State Needs* - This area should address the nature of projects that are on the states' radar screen and the types of sediment they think they'll need.

Subsequent discussions indicated that the group generally agreed with these focus areas for now but recommended that it remain open for further refinement. A single focus area will be the topic of subsequent conference calls.

8. Further discussions continued around the "*Policies, authorities and funding*" focus area. An issue was raised that wording in the Federal standard put greater emphasis on quantifying economic values of ecosystem restoration justify the additional costs of BU. What is really needed is a greater emphasis on the need for greater effort to quantify the value of ecosystem services provided by environmental improvements. Another issue raised by Ray Newby of TX is language in cost sharing agreements for Continuing Authority Projects (CAP) projects, CERCLA and indemnification issues, is a problem for TX. It was suggested that this be addressed in discussions at TX workshop in May.

9. It was suggested that a dredged material management and beneficial use primer be drafted to help provide a common baseline of policies, circumstances, issues for RRCT-GRSMMP team discussions in connection with developing the GRSMMP, and provide recommendations. The primer may cover topic such as:

- New authorizations vs. older authorized projects – explain the "Federal Standard", and flexibilities to incorporate environmental benefits. Include variability with the project authorization.

- Incremental analysis of the environmental benefits of alternative sediment placement options as is currently done.

- Potential of identifying "dollar value benefits" of placement options that involve beneficial uses; shrimp fisheries, hazard mitigation values of the dunes. Look at other innovations that might be useful in the future?

- "Beach nourishment" – management measure that may be undertaken for different purposes, e.g.

- It may be done for "coastal storm damage reduction" purposes – benefits in terms of NED and are in \$\$'s;
- May be done for habitat restoration or protection – typically not monetized

- By-passing of sand across inlets to retain availability to the littoral system
- Are there “indexes” used to assess costs per disposal alternatives?
- Explain the "decision processes" and how the benefits are considered in each instance.

A subgroup was formed for the “*Policies, authorities and funding*” focus area. Volunteers for the team include: Ray Newby, John Bowie, Carl Ferraro, Kris Benson, Rafael Calderon, and Lynn Martin. Team members from the Corps Districts will be recommended as well as other agency volunteers.

10. Funds are being identified to assist states for travel to out-of-state Alliance meetings. Funding sources include grant money from EPA, grant money from EPA R1 items, NOAA, Gulf Foundation, and Corps.

11. Upcoming meetings:

- May 22-24 Galveston, TX - Next state hosted-meeting (TX)
- July 10-12 – Alliance workshop – St Petersburg, FL
- Week of 20 Aug - FL hosted RRCT workshop
- Consider planning a GRSMMP session at the Aug meeting

12. The next GRSMMP conference call will be Thursday, May 3 at 2:00 central.